

Prekindergarten Expansion Grant:

Technical Assistance Meeting for Potential Grant Applicants

May 14, 2014

1:30 pm to 3:30 pm

Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE)

8th floor, Conference Room 6/7

Note:

The questions and responses below have been recorded at the meeting. In addition, additional questions have been included. MSDE will expand this list of questions until June 11, 2014. Please monitor this website regularly.

Corrections : The document, entitled *Prekindergarten Expansion – Guidance*, included an incorrect submission date. The correct submission date is June 11, 2014. The correct COMAR reference under *Definitions* within the same document is 13A.16.16.

Questions and Answers:

Q – Are local school systems accountable for community-based programs receiving grant funds under Absolute Priority I?

No. Any community-based program receiving a grant award is accountable to MSDE. The Division of Early Childhood Development will programmatically and fiscally monitor the programs.

Q – How about a local school system submitting an application under Absolute Priority II but in collaboration with a community-based program?

In this case, local school systems are accountable to MSDE for the grant and program quality since the local school system is the recipient of state funds.

Q – Must a local school system submit a grant application in collaboration with a community-based program?

No. Absolute Priority II enables local school systems to apply for funds to establish half-day or full-day prekindergarten classrooms in public schools.

Q- Does an applicant have to be accredited at time of application for the grant?

Yes, all applicants must be nationally or MSDE accredited.

Q- I'd like to learn more about the network idea and I am interested in applying. Will there be more technical assistance?

If an applicant would like more technical assistance on how to create a network, please contact Jenaya Parris at jesmith@msde.state.md.us and request technical assistance.

Q- If you have a program with 3- and 4-year old children but the classes are not mixed what do you apply for?

As a community-based program, you would apply for 4-year olds under Absolute Priority I.

Q – Does the teacher of four-year old children have to hold an MSDE certification in Early Childhood?

Yes, the teacher of record for a classroom funded by this grant must have certification.

Q – Do all the children in this classroom of 20 four year olds have to meet 300% poverty or below poverty definition?

All 20 children, funded under this grant, must meet the 300% or below of poverty definition.

Q – How does this funding affect child care costs for parents that meet the poverty definition?

This funding is designed to provide eligible families a tuition discount for the free portion of a half-day (2.5 hours) or full-day (6.5. hours). For instance, an eligible family pays \$200 per week child care tuition, the tuition break for half-day would be \$40 and for full-day \$80. Therefore, the family pays \$160 or \$120 per week, respectively.

Q – What if a prekindergarten student enrolled under this grant, exits the program in the middle of the school year?

It is the expectation that another eligible 4-year old will be recruited.

Q – How does a program recruit students?

As you communicate with the local school system, find out about their waiting list of prekindergarten students or work with your local Judy Centers to connect with families that qualify.

Q – Does a program have to be open for 180 days?

The statute requires each successful applicant to operate an education program for 180 days and 5 days a week.

Q – If a charter school is using a lottery for admission, how does this apply to recruitment?

Maryland's Charter School regulations require the use of a lottery system for K-12. There are no lottery provisions for prekindergarten.

Q – Are the priorities I, II and III in order of rank and importance?

No, the priorities are of equal importance. Applicants will compete within each of the priority areas.

Q – There are nursery schools that run 3 days a week. To apply will they have to change to five days?

Yes. The statute requires each successful applicant to operate an education program for 180 days and 5 days a week.

Q – How does a public charter school apply?

A charter school can apply under Absolute Priority I independently or under Absolute Priority II by its local school system.

Q – What happens if the local school system does not provide the applicant with a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in time for the application deadline?

The applicant should provide evidence that the MOU is in process or if the local school system refuses to sign an MOU, then a letter of support should be sent with a copy of the unsigned MOU. A charter school agreement can be used in lieu of an MOU. A main sponsor of preschool programs (e.g., an Archdiocese) can create one MOU for all the preschools that are applying in their local school system.

Q – Can a religious school apply?

Religiously affiliated preschools with a certificate of approval from MSDE may apply. However, in order to meet one of the quality benchmarks they must implement a MSDE recommended preschool curriculum for the prekindergarten portion of the day, a curriculum of historic significance, or a curriculum from the local school system. (See http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/preschool_curriculum/overview.html for more information on state-recommended preschool curricula.)

Q – Can Head Start programs apply?

Yes, if they are accredited or on Level 5 in Maryland EXCELS.

Q – How many years does the funding cover? Will the program have to reapply?

The funding will continue as long as the program meets the quality benchmarks. The grantee will send in a continuation plan for the following year.

Q – Will there be another opportunity to apply for this program?

If funding is available for 2015-2016 school year, another RFP will be issued in spring 2015.

Q- Does a program that is nationally accredited have to participate in Maryland EXCELS?

Yes, the grant requirements include that an accredited program participate in Maryland EXCELS at the time of applying for this grant and to be published at Level 5 within 12 months, i.e., the length of the grant.

Q – Is there a list for whom to contact in each LSS to get an MOU?

Yes, a list will be posted online.

Q – Does this grant include funds for meals?

Programs are encouraged to apply for the federal program entitled Child and Adult Care Food Program to receive funding for food. MSDE is administering this program.

Q – Can one apply under more than one priority?

Yes, you can apply under more than one priority.

Q – What is option 3 for a Judy Center application (Absolute Priority III)?

If you apply for option 3 you will receive extra credit for your application.

Q – Should an applicant complete an application for each child care site?

One operator can write one application for several sites even across jurisdictions.

Q - Do the children have to reside in a certain school system to participate in this grant class?

No. Prekindergarten students enrolled under this grant can reside from different school systems.

Q - If there are children who would qualify to attend public school on a basis other than income (IEP, medical, etc) and they would normally attend at an accredited community-based program the other half of the day, are they eligible to meet the grant requirements?

Yes, but only as half-day enrollees.

Q – Do teachers with a 4- year degree meet the quality benchmarks of the grant?

No. The benchmark specifically calls for teachers with a state teaching certificate in early childhood education. Degreed teachers in nursery schools do not meet the benchmark for this grant.

Q - We have developed our own preschool curriculum. The standards meet and exceed Maryland's standards. Can we continue to use our own proprietary curriculum or do we need to purchase a new one?

MSDE's Division of Early Childhood Education established a process to recognize individually developed curricula. Contact Jenaya Smith Parris at jesmith@msde.state.md.us for more information.

Q – How can we get hold of a list of the *Preschool for All* pilot programs?

Please consult the following website for a report on the pilot sites:

http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/divisions/child_care/docs/2013_JPH_Preschool_For_All.pdf

Q - How many certified teachers does a program have to have on staff?

For each group of 20 eligible four-year olds funded, the grant will support one teacher with state teaching certification in early childhood education. However, programs may assign eligible four-year olds to other classrooms within the program if it's more beneficial for the student.